

comments from very early on in this pandemic.

This is the way they looked at it: They saw this pandemic as “a tremendous opportunity to structure things to fit our vision.” That was the House Democratic whip. Speaker PELOSI herself put it this way: “This is an opportunity. Every crisis is.” Working families call this pandemic a crisis. They call it a nightmare. But leading Democrats call it “an opportunity.”

Just listen to some of their demands. These are the Democrats’ demands that stood between all of this help and the Americans who need it.

Here is one: Democrats say nobody gets another dime of relief unless State and local governments get about \$1 trillion in extra money. Let me say that again. Democrats are saying nobody gets another dime of relief unless State and local governments get \$1 trillion in extra money.

Let’s put a few facts on the table.

No. 1, State and local governments have spent only about one-fourth of the huge sums we sent them back in the springtime—\$150 billion.

No. 2, the economists who have calculated the likely COVID-related shortfalls for State and local governments have mostly produced estimates that are entire multiples less—entire multiples less—than what Democrats are demanding.

No. 3, in our HEALS Act, Republicans tried to give States and localities extra flexibility around the unspent funds they already had—extra flexibility around the unspent funds they already had. In my State, for example, 94 percent of the money we sent them has not been spent.

We wanted to send huge sums to help with schools, which are one of the States’ biggest expenses. Typically, in a State budget, the two biggest items are education and Medicaid.

But forget all that. Democrats are demanding that we send State and local governments a colossal amount of money, with no relationship to actual need, while they have only spent a quarter—25 percent—of the money they have already gotten.

Clearly, this isn’t about COVID. Democrats think they smell an opening they have wanted for years—to make Uncle Sam bail out decades of mismanagement and broken policies in places like New York, New Jersey, and California. So they have decided that no working family anywhere in America can get another cent—not one cent—unless they get to create a trillion-dollar slush fund for mismanaged States, completely and totally out of proportion to pandemic needs.

Here is another one of those far-left demands: Nobody gets another dime unless we indefinitely pay people more to stay home than to go back to work.

Republicans agree we ought to continue additional Federal jobless benefits during this extraordinary time. Senate Republicans tried several times to stop them from expiring. The Democratic leader blocked us.

Our view, which a majority of Americans share, is simply that it disincentivizes rehiring and reopening to pay people more to stay home. It is a statement of the obvious. It disincentivizes rehiring and reopening to pay people more to stay home.

Plenty of Democrats said they saw the point and were happy to negotiate on this. Speaker PELOSI’s own No. 2, the House majority leader, said: “It is not \$600 or bust.” That was the No. 2 Democrat in the House. The senior Senator from Maryland said: “We certainly understand. We don’t want to have a higher benefit than what someone can make working.” Oh, no. But the Speaker and the Democratic leader overruled them. No deal. No deal unless we pay people more to stay home.

That is not about COVID. It is not about a real reopening. It is about far-left ideology. They preferred for the jobless benefits to go down to zero—zero—unless they could pay people more to stay home.

Does anyone in this country really believe that relief for Americans should be totally contingent on bailing out States for mismanagement that predated the pandemic by decades? Does anyone really think it was better for jobless benefits to completely expire unless we pay people more not to work? And does anyone really think that Congress should walk away from countless subjects where a bipartisan agreement should be possible over these fringe positions? Do Americans think Democrats should walk away from school funding, testing, cash to households, preventing a spike in seniors’ Medicare premiums, legal reform, and more, over this?

I think almost every family in America would answer these questions the same way, but unfortunately Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader have answered them the opposite way. They think they have political leverage over the President of the United States, and so they are willing to personally increase the pain for vulnerable families unless they get their way on matters not related to COVID.

Republicans wanted to agree on the things we could agree to. Democrats said: Our way or the highway.

Republicans wanted to send cash now—right now—for schools, testing, and unemployment benefits and argue over State bailouts later. Democrats said nobody gets a penny unless Texas and Florida bail out New Jersey. That is their position. Nobody gets a penny unless Texas and Florida bail out New Jersey.

So this is where we are. The previous UI benefits expired. The PPP closed its doors.

Over the weekend, President Trump took steps to soften the blow of the Democrats’ hostage tactics on American families who need help most. His decisions will help spare some Americans some of the pain from the Democrats’ hostage-taking.

From the beginning—from the very beginning—our side has tried every-

thing possible to find common ground and deliver more help, but the Democrats have said no. At least the American people know the score. At least they know the score.

#### HONG KONG

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a totally different matter, this weekend brought more unsettling news in the ongoing struggle for Hong Kong to preserve any shred of its civil liberties and self-governance.

One of the region’s most prominent pro-democracy advocates, Jimmy Lai, was arrested yesterday for alleged violations of the so-called national security law imposed by Beijing.

Last year, after a historic election that saw millions flock to the polls to overwhelmingly reject President Xi’s preferred candidates, the Chinese Communist Party moved quickly to choke Hongkongers’ free expression.

Mr. Lai has been at the vanguard of the vibrant Hong Kong-based media and publishing world.

Jimmy Lai was arrested for an alleged violation of the so-called national security law imposed by Beijing. He has devoted much of his life to advancing precisely—precisely the sort of values that the CCP finds most repulsive: freedom of thought and freedom of speech.

The Senate, the country, and freedom-loving nations across the world stand with Mr. Lai and with all the peaceful demonstrators who have met the business end of the CCP’s repression.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, over the weekend, the United States